



Basingstoke Advocacy Scheme

25th January 2011

Press release

Basingstoke Advocacy Scheme (BAS) is to merge with Solent Mind from February 2011. BAS is an independent advocacy organisation for people who experience mental ill-health or distress and Solent Mind is the largest, third sector provider of mental health services across Hampshire.

The merger will strengthen advocacy support services for residents in Basingstoke and North Hampshire and bring Solent Mind's experience and expertise to the Basingstoke charity.

The Basingstoke Advocacy Scheme has been operating for 11 years and has supported hundreds of residents each year that needed someone to speak for them on issues such as, their entitlements, benefits, employment, housing and finance. BAS specialises in supporting clients with mental health problems and in recent months has started a pilot project to provide advocacy services for the over 65s. The Basingstoke Advocacy Scheme will continue to be based at 54 Southern Road in Basingstoke.

John Dickinson, Chair of BAS, welcomes the merger: "It will broaden the experience base of the charity and ensure a continuity of support to those most in need within the local community. There are so many people who need to have their voices heard more clearly, particularly in these times when support services are so stretched in terms of funding and human resources."

Richard Barritt, the CEO of Solent Mind said: "We were delighted to be approached by Basingstoke Advocacy Scheme to take on their advocacy work in the north of Hampshire. BAS has been speaking up for people with mental health needs for many years. That's a legacy we want to build on. We believe it will complement our advocacy work in the rest of Hampshire and in Southampton. With cutbacks to mental health services happening across

Hampshire, it is more important than ever to give vulnerable people a voice.” He added “For people who are currently using BAS services, or needing these services over the next few days and weeks, please be assured it will be business as usual: same address, same telephone number.”

Please visit the websites for more information about the charities:

www.basingstokeadvocacy.org.uk

www.solentmind.org.uk

-ENDS-

For further information, please contact Julie Dean or Hannah Keddie at Grayling on 02380 382970 or email: hannah.keddie@grayling.com